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ABSTRACT

This document is the final report of the Unesco seminar on international understanding. The major purposes of the seminar were twofold: (1) to evaluate implementation of human rights and peace-related recommendations within Unesco member nations since 1974 and (2) to suggest how to develop and implement more effective human rights/international understanding approaches in the context of traditional and out-of-school education. The seminar was attended by 21 educational experts from 15 Unesco member nations and by 14 observers from Bulgaria. Presentation of status reports from the 15 nations represented at the seminar indicated that member states had been successful in implementing the 1974 recommendations in various ways, particularly in the areas of promoting the study of world issues and concentrating on helping young people think rationally about social and political issues. Suggestions for making education for international understanding and peace even more effective in the future included helping teachers acquire professional skills in the area of international understanding, fostering a climate of tolerance within classrooms, providing resources and release time to teachers so they can develop curriculum, initiating more cooperative ventures among Unesco member states, encouraging teacher and student exchanges, increasing out-of-school opportunities such as Unesco clubs and summer camps, and including the organization of a World Congress on Education for International Understanding in Unesco's program for 1981-83. A directory of seminar participants and observers concludes the document. (DB)

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,

SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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(Sofia, Bulgaria, 15-20 October 1979)

FINAL REPORT

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PARIS, 28 March 1980
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FINAL REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 An international seminar of experts from Member States of the European Region of Unesco was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 15 to 20 October 1979. The seminar, held under the auspices of Unesco, organized by the Bulgarian Ministry of Public Education, had as its purpose an evaluation on the implementation of the Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (referred to hereafter as "the Recommendation on International Understanding" or simply "the Recommendation") in Member States of the European Region since its adoption by the General Conference of Unesco at its eighteenth session in Paris, 19 November 1974. The Seminar took into account the series of regional seminars previously held on the implementation of the Recommendation and the provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (Helsinki, 1975).

1.2 A total of 21 experts from 15 Member States participated in the seminar (Annex I), together with 14 observers from the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Papers for the seminar included the Recommendation itself as well as two basic working papers. The first of these entitled "Some Background and Issues of Implementation of the Recommendation" by Dr. Stacy Churchill (Canada), is included as Annex II and the second entitled "The Role of the Associated Schools Project in the Implementation of the Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding" by Mme. Madeleine de Vits (Belgium), is included as Annex III. In addition, the participants presented national status reports on the implementation of the Recommendation since 1974.

1.3 Mr. Peter Nikolov, Deputy Minister of Public Education, welcomed participants to Bulgaria and wished them fruitful work during the course of the week. He expressed his pleasure at the decision of Unesco to organize the seminar in Sofia at the invitation of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and expressed his own concern on the need for international understanding, co-operation, peace and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. He then described the character and purpose of the educational system in Bulgaria and communicated his hope that during the period of the participants' stay in Bulgaria there would be opportunity to visit and gain impressions of curricular practice in schools and other educational institutions.

1.4 The meeting was then addressed on behalf of the Director-General by Mr. Ryon Kwan Kim, Chief of the Section of Education for International Co-operation and Peace of the Unesco Secretariat. Mr. Kim conveyed the greetings of the Director-General and his sincere appreciation of Mrs. Maria Zakharieva, Chairman of the Bulgarian National Commission for Unesco and Mrs. Trifonova of the Division of International Co-operation of the Ministry of Public Education for the preparatory work for the seminar and for the necessary administrative arrangements.

Mr. Kim then outlined some positive achievements of Unesco in the field of education for international understanding in the period since 1953 when the Unesco Associated Schools Project came into being. He said that the educational achievements since that time were considerable and highlighted some of these which included an upsurge of activity on the part of over 1300 institutions in 74 Member States. In associated schools and colleges pilot projects and special programmes were designed to increase knowledge of world issues. Furthermore, he described projects for critical reviews of school textbooks especially history and geography textbooks, and Unesco's endeavour to foster global perspectives for innovative and interdisciplinary curricula and methods.

In focusing upon the task of the seminar, Mr. Kim pointed out the following two main purposes:

(a) to take stock of the situation with regard to the implementation of the Recommendation within the European Region; and

(b) to suggest ways and means of adopting more effective approaches and methods at all levels in the context of both school and out-of-school education.

1.5 At the opening session, the following officers were elected:

Chairman:	Ms. Anny Spantcheva (Bulgaria)
Vice-Chairman:	Mr. Roger Grandbois (France)
	Ms. Kaisa Savolainen (Finland)
Rapporteur:	Mr. O. J. Dunlop (United Kingdom)
Co-Rapporteur:	Ms. Madeleine de Vits (Belgium).

2. Presentation of national status reports and discussion

2.1 During the first two days of the seminar participants presented national status reports which indicated the extent to which it had been possible to implement the Recommendation on Education for International Understanding since its adoption in 1974.

2.2 While taking into account the variety of circumstances which prevail in the educational systems of Member States present at the Seminar it was clear that the overall response to the need for education for international understanding had been both sympathetic and constructive. In many instances involvement in this field of education had begun prior to 1974 but it was the case that since that year many new educational initiatives had occurred intent upon promoting the study of world issues both within the formal and informal sectors of education. Moreover, it emerged from discussion of national status reports that participants shared a common concern about those constraints which existed as hindrances to the wider application of the Recommendation.

2.3 There was general agreement on the underlying unity of thought which occupies much of the Recommendation. In a world subject to the continuous processes which affect evolution and change there is a clear case for bringing young people in particular into contact with contemporary world issues. Opinions harden quickly. Social attitudes once formed are slow to change and whatever can be done early in their lives to help individuals think rationally about social and political issues will bring a greater benefit than equivalent efforts later when barriers of bias and bigotry will be more difficult to overcome. In this regard it is important to accept the multifaceted character of present day life and to ensure that means be found to reflect this in the school curriculum.

2.4 In order to accommodate more effectively in educational systems and at various levels those issues identified in the Recommendation it was felt that attention should be given to ways which might facilitate the process. Specifically mentioned were:

(a) the need to enable teachers to acquire the professional skills and competences to present world issues in the classroom. This would have clear implications for teacher training institutions in both pre- and in-service contexts and for lecturing staffs of colleges and universities. The teacher, despite being under great pressure in his or her professional work was, nevertheless, widely acknowledged to be a key figure in the process of curriculum innovation since such changes have to pass through him or her;

(b) the need to create the correct educational atmosphere in the classroom to help foster a climate of understanding and tolerance. It might be appropriate in this context to devise - in addition to coverage of specific thematic areas exemplified in paragraph 18 of the Recommendation - an appropriate methodology which would engage the emotions through the use of song, dance and aesthetics generally;

(c) in recognition of the key role of the teacher it was recognized that the teacher should be given adequate support in order to promote education for international understanding. In addition to the manner in which the network concept related to the Unesco Associated Schools Project might offer support and contact with others in a difficult educational area, it was generally agreed that the teacher involved in education for international understanding ought to have available a wide range of publications and other classroom aids for his use. These, whether teachers' guidebooks on education for international understanding incorporating as case studies examples of good curriculum practice or classroom-directed materials could, with profit to the aims of the Recommendation, be taken up as activities by Unesco.

2.5 During the course of the time allocated to the presentation of national status reports and observations of participants on these, the following points were stressed by one or more of the speakers:

(a) great significance was attached to the Unesco Recommendation on International Understanding, and despite the fact that five years had elapsed since its adoption it was still necessary to ensure that it had the widest possible dissemination;

(b) the Recommendation where it had had an impact upon Member States' education systems had helped to diminish an insularity of outlook in young people, and greater efforts in adding an international dimension to the curriculum in the spirit of the Recommendation at all levels would further this process;

(c) efforts had been made in many instances of improving textbooks, notably in the social studies subjects; in specific instances, such as that affecting the Federal Republic of Germany and Poland, bilateral agreements on the reciprocal study and revision of textbooks to ensure that these were "balanced, up to date and unprejudiced" (the Recommendation para. 45) had taken place. Other examples of multilateral activity in textbook revision affected countries along the Danube, and on the initiative of the Finnish National Commission for Unesco are multilateral evaluation of secondary school history and social studies teaching material involving six European countries had begun;

(d) it was impossible for education for international understanding to take place in a vacuum and it should be seen as an enterprise which ought, for example, to affect the entire curriculum through a penetration of existing subjects. There were clear implications, too, for out-of-school activities such as informal adult education, summer camps for young people and Unesco clubs and in the ways by which education for international understanding could affect the prospects for the future of the world;

(e) the problem of translating educational ideas into a practical form was identified as well as the tasks of bridging the gap between rhetoric and purposeful action. The identification of change agents such as curriculum designers and examination boards was noted as a possible means of accommodating and catering for the study of the major problems of mankind;

(f) it was important to conduct research into the ways in which children perceive issues concerning international understanding. Insufficient data is available at the present time, and if the nature of the work being undertaken in the field of international understanding is likely to have a lasting effect upon attitudes held by individuals then this area ought to be given due attention;

(g) the value of teacher and student exchanges was recognized as being valuable in promoting greater understanding. It was hoped, moreover, that the advantages which could emerge from regional or international contacts between teacher organizations in Member States would merit appropriate attention from Unesco.

3. During the latter stages of the seminar consideration was given to practical ways by which education for international understanding could be promoted; specific reference was made to the working paper written by Dr. Stacy Churchill. The issues on implementation of the Recommendation covered inter alia:

a system of organizational control and decision making;

a set of objectives for change and related decisions;

consensus of persons involved (particularly teachers) on the aims of the reforms;

availability of resources (financial, human, material);

mechanism for study and/or experimentation and revision of approaches to be implemented (organizational structures, materials, methods, roles) and the means of evaluating results.

In addition, direct attention was focused upon implementing and extending the provisions of the Recommendation at various educational levels and situations.

3.1 In the general discussion of these matters, the following points were stressed:

(a) it was not possible in all Member States represented to produce the necessary legislation in order to implement the Recommendation. The constitutional provisions of Member States differed in this regard in being able to accommodate such legislation, and whereas some Member States had a centralized educational system others were decentralized. Nevertheless, the Recommendation indicates that Member States should apply the provisions of the Recommendation by taking whatever legislative or other steps may be required in conformity with the constitutional practice of each state to give effect within their respective territories to the principles set forth;

(b) the role of the teacher in helping implement the Recommendation was a theme allocated additional attention. In particular it was stressed that there was a great need for appropriate in-service training in order to help prepare the teacher for the considerable responsibility of presenting in the classroom themes related to the major problems of mankind. Certain difficulties of definition remained. But the main difficulties affecting teacher education in particular were those related to the design of appropriate teaching strategies and production of resource material at various levels and the means of evaluating these.

There might be some benefit arising from bilateral or multilateral revision of school textbooks, for educational institutions to devise ways of comparing teacher training programmes and of curricular practice at various levels;

(c) curriculum practice can be improved if an evaluation process accompanies such practice. It may be that the character of education for international understanding needs to be made more concrete and be reflected in curriculum materials. Beyond this stage, research into the implementation and analysis of policy could prove to be helpful to educationists. Above all, in developing in young people a global perspective and an increased understanding of contemporary affairs, we need to know more on the sequence of thinking since concepts and knowledge are built upon what has gone before. Instances of research were mentioned with the

Recommendation as a starting point, specifically: how young children view the world by means of books and other materials, and concerning children's concept of human rights. It was felt that in general a great deal more ought to be done in the field of education for international understanding in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching.

3.2 In considering the implementation of the Recommendation at various educational levels the following points were stressed:

(a) the Recommendation has significance for all educational institutions from nursery schools through to universities and other institutes of higher education;

(b) there was an important role for parents to play as well as teachers in the promotion of international understanding;

(c) it was appropriate to influence the education of adults as well as children, particularly because of the increasing trend in vacations abroad and also in light of the social trend towards increased leisure time generally. Attention, too, ought to be given to catering for the education of senior citizens since education for international understanding should be the proper concern of the whole of society;

(d) it was necessary to seek appropriate ways of ensuring that adequate educational broadcasting time be made available to achieve a balanced coverage of world affairs;

(e) greater attention ought to be given to the teaching of foreign languages particularly with very young children since an early knowledge of a foreign language makes the appreciation of another culture much easier to acquire. In this process of developing competence in a second language due attention should be given to safeguarding a child's ability to communicate in the mother tongue.

(f) Finally, in recognition of the fact that 1979 is the International Year of the Child, due and adequate attention in terms of time and resources ought to be directed towards the education of disadvantaged children, who, like other children, have the right to education presented in the spirit of international understanding.

4. Suggestions and recommendations

4.1 Co-ordination of Unesco's activities

(a) In the programme for 1981-83 Unesco should include the organization of a World Congress on Education for International Understanding to engage the attention and support of governments of Member States;

(b) Unesco should establish a periodic reporting system relating to the Recommendation and should be encouraged to convene a meeting of specialists, either ad hoc or for a period of time, to review these reports and advise the Organization on programmes and policies relating to the Recommendation;

(c) in its programme and work plan for 1981-83 under the objective for the training of educational personnel, Unesco should make greater provisions for the implementation of the Recommendation;

(d) Unesco should continue to organize at regular intervals seminars and workshops at both regional and international levels and assist Member States with such meetings;

(e) Unesco is invited to convene a series of meetings of experts in developmental psychology, curriculum development and educational research to help design and stimulate action-research on the formation of attitudes supportive of education for international understanding. This should then serve as the basis for curriculum development efforts and the design of evaluations and the support by Unesco of research;

(f) the Member States of Unesco are invited to establish appropriate procedures which would enable educational broadcasts on radio and on television to be produced in order to cover in an adequate and balanced manner those issues highlighted in the Recommendation. Means should be found through Unesco to facilitate the exchange between Member States of such educational broadcast material, particularly in the medium of television;

(g) Unesco should examine its programmes designed to promote the enjoyment of education of groups especially women, refugees and migrant workers and its publications dealing with curriculum improvements in various subject areas in order to ensure that their content reflect education for international understanding;

(h) Unesco is invited to produce a brief pamphlet intended for the use of educationists which, in a clearly presented format, shows that international understanding, peace, co-operation, human rights and fundamental freedoms are interconnected and of key importance;

(i) Unesco together with Member States is invited to continue the practice of supporting international summer camps for all students including those of Unesco Associated Schools;

(j) Unesco is invited to extend the co-operation between Unesco and teacher organizations and also to help the development of professional relations between these organizations at national, regional and international levels in order to help realize the aim of education for international understanding.

4.2 Co-operation between Member States

(a) Member States are reminded of the significance of the Recommendation and are called upon to make the necessary constitutional provisions, administrative and practical measures for the implementation of the Recommendation;

Member States are thereafter invited to publicize these administrative and practical measures taken in the area of education for international understanding in order to create interest and develop educational co-operation at an international level;

(b) Member States are invited to note that the different items and parts of the Recommendation should be considered and implemented in their unity and that those close interrelationships and connections be taken into account in both formal and non-formal educational activities;

(c) the attention and active participation of Member States of Unesco is drawn to the recommendations made at the International Congress on the Teaching of Human Rights held in Vienna in September 1978 and to a seven-year plan for the development of the teaching of human rights which has been elaborated upon by an international meeting of experts held at Unesco House in June 1979 following the recommendations made at the Vienna Congress. Member States are invited to note these developments and to participate actively in the plan;

(d) Member States are asked to take suitable steps to make available to all persons responsible for education, to all educators and their organizations, the text of the Recommendation in order to ensure its widest dissemination. The Recommendation and related documents should be published in their native languages;

(e) Member States are invited to include the application of the Recommendation notably at the time when educational reforms are taking place and to make available appropriate financial, human and material resources;

(f) Member States in order to accommodate appropriate pedagogical strategies referred to above should further continue and encourage experimental approaches in the practice of interdisciplinary education.

4.3 Educational curricula

(a) Member States are invited to accept the view that the implementation of the Recommendation and achievement of its goals is most likely to be achieved if applied in education at all levels, from nursery education to post-school education and when all educational agencies and departments are involved;

(b) Member States should be encouraged to engage specialists to examine the content of topics related to the Recommendation, e.g. anthropologists, specialists in law and in international relations and specialists from other disciplines. They should be asked to examine the curriculum materials to ensure the accuracy of content and, where appropriate, to suggest interdisciplinary approaches;

(c) in developing curriculum materials Member States should be encouraged to include topics such as defined in the Recommendation as the major problems of mankind;

(d) in the teaching of education for international understanding the basic document should be the Recommendation but should be supported by all other relevant UN Declarations, Covenants and Recommendations. Such documents as may be used in the teaching of human rights, moreover, should stress the indivisibility of all human rights;

(e) Member States should be encouraged to identify the various steps by which changes in education and the professional practices of teachers take place in their nations, especially in areas related to education for international understanding, e.g.:

(i) ways of drawing attention to the need for this education for example, by obtaining evidence that there are gaps in students' knowledge of other nations or of international organizations;

(ii) ways of encouraging and giving publicity to model programmes of education for international understanding, (including, for example, those from the Associated Schools) and to teachers who are models of outstanding practice in this area;

(iii) ways of giving educationists access to information about these subjects and the opportunity to try out new ideas for active approaches to education, for example, by including role-playing exercises in in-service education and encouraging exchange programmes;

(iv) ways of providing positive feedback and reinforcement of education for international understanding, especially through school administrators and ensuring, as noted in the Final Document of the Vienna Congress on the Teaching of Human Rights, that "teachers' personal integrity and freedom of expression be guaranteed".

(f) Member States should be encouraged to stimulate university faculties in a variety of disciplines to conduct research which deals with:

(i) an analysis of educational policy at all levels and the way that it relates to education for international understanding;

(ii) the specific characteristics of different ages which may make the early primary age group especially important for language instruction and instilling basic attitudes; the older child is especially receptive to detailed presentations of concepts in education for international understanding and of the perspectives of those who live in other nations;

(iii) the images of the world and of human history which exist in the minds of young people;

(iv) classroom observations which evaluate the use and value of different teaching methods;

(v) experimental studies of curriculum materials' effectiveness in transmitting knowledge and building attitudes supportive of education for international understanding using interviews as well as questionnaires.

(g) Member States are invited to consider ways by which themes related to education for international understanding could be accommodated in terminal or maturity examinations at school. It might prove possible to publish and publicize such student material and exchange it internationally.

4.4 Teacher education

Member States are asked to note that in order to promote education for international understanding particular attention should be paid to teacher education. Attention should be given to theoretical instruction in general and in specific subjects, to methodology and to practical work in order to help teachers in pre-service training to implement the Recommendation. In addition, a special effort should be made in the in-service or continuing education of teachers in order to help keep them abreast of innovatory practices in this field and to help them improve their knowledge of world issues. Where possible measures might be examined which would facilitate study leave or provide opportunities for professional practice in other countries.

4.5 Educational materials

(a) Member States are invited to ensure that teachers have an adequate supply of teaching material to help teach the themes contained in the Recommendation. Member States are advised to create national resource centres which would stock United Nations and other materials in order to assist teachers and others;

(b) authors and editors of textbooks and other materials should be encouraged to consider the contents of the Recommendation, and those persons and commissions which are responsible for the preparation of the curriculum should pay special attention to the Recommendation and be encouraged to take it into account in designing curriculum materials;

(c) the exchange of curricular materials on an international scale should be facilitated.

4.6 The role of the Associated Schools Project

Member States are reminded of the existence and potential force of the Unesco Associated Schools Project as a means of achieving education for international understanding in schools and colleges throughout the world. All Member States should take part in this Project and give assurance that those schools may function as pilot schools, a role designed for them within the field of education for international understanding.

5. The Unesco Seminar held in Sofia wishes to reassert that there is a close interdependence between the implementation of the Recommendation and the dominant world problems.

ANNEX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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